SAFE TEA TIME

Safety Triangles or Safety Kites

by ***Ir. Shum Keng Yan***

HOW many of you have heard of the Safety Triangle (some call it Accident Triangle)?

Most readers are not from the safety field and are trying to decipher Safety 101 as espoused by their respective safety people. Thus I will try to steer away from safety jargons unless it is necessary. Each organisation has a term they like to use. That is fine. The main thing is the idea gets through.

The Safety Triangle is not the triangle the cleaning lady puts up when she is mopping the floor. The Safety Triangle is the order of the severity of an accident.

In theory, the most severe accidents are by far fewer than the less severe ones. Think of unsafe incidents as buying BAD lotteries! The more bad lotteries the organisation accepts, the higher the chances of winning the major incident prize! So experts worked out via statistics and data gathering that it should look like a triangle (trust me, I can prove it with a simple 11.7-minute exercise with you using your own experience).

However, in actual data gathering (without coercion on the employees), the "triangle" actually looks like an inverted kite! Like this:

Why is this so?? This is mainly due to under reporting of near misses (and in some cases, even first aid!). The primary cause is that almost everyone thinks that near misses are trivial. Some companies do not even look below near miss (or even at near miss). Should we aim to get the perfect triangle to fit the theory? Is it worth the effort? I will talk to you on Safety Rockets next month and hope to continue this discussion.

To share your views on how an actual triangle looks like with my high school geometry lecturer, drop me a diagram at: kengyan.shum@gmail.com. ■

I wish you and your loved ones a Happy Lunar New Year! Drive safely, no queue jumping and remember to come back to work after the holidays! In fact, while driving, it is a very good time to study unsafe acts!

Circulating in cyberspace ...

Poor man ...

The average man's life consists of:

Twenty years of having his mother ask him where he is going;

Forty years of having his wife ask the same question; and

At the end, having the mourners wonder where he is going!